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Foreign Affairs, Africa, Hunger : Crisis in Africa and the U.S. Response 2/26/1987

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OPENING STATEMENT

CHAIRMAN MICKEY LELAND
HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUNGER

CRISIS IN AFRICA AND THE

U.S. RESPONSE

FEBRUARY 26, 1987

GOOD MORNING LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,
MY DISTINGUISHED COLLEAGUES. I
WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR ESTEEMED
WITNESSES FOR BEING AVAILABLE TO
SHARE VIEWS ON THE CONTINUING
CRISIS IN AFRICA AND ON WHAT CAN BE
DONE TO IMPROVE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE TO THAT CRISIS. ALL OF US
LOOK FORWARD TO DISCUSSING THESE
IMPORTANT MATTERS WITH YOU.

IT IS FITTING THAT THE SELECT
COMMITTEE'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL
HEARING OF THE 100TH CONGRESS BE ON
THE AFRICAN CRISIS. THIS
COMMITTEE, FROM ITS INCEPTION, HAS
BEEN ENGAGED IN EFFORTS TO ENSURE
AN ADEQUATE AND APPROPRIATE

RESPONSE TO THE FAMINE AND HUMAN SUFFERING ENDURED ACROSS THE CONTINENT. WE HAVE, I HOPE, HELPED SAVE THE LIVES OF MANY IN ETHIOPIA, THE SUDAN, THE SAHEL AND IN THE OTHER REGIONS DEVASTATED BY DROUGHT. TODAY WE FACE DIFFERENT CHALLENGES IN AFRICA. BUT OUR RESPONSE CAN BE NO LESS VIGILANT, OUR DETERMINATION NO LESS CERTAIN. THE PEOPLE OF AFRICA NEED OUR BEST EFFORTS EVEN MORE TODAY AS THE SPOTLIGHT HAS FADED BUT THE PROBLEMS HAVE DEEPENED.

AFRICA HAS REACHED A CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN ITS DEVELOPMENT. MOST OF THE COUNTRIES THAT WERE HARDEST

HIT BY THE RECENT FAMINE HAVE
STARTED TO RECOVER. THE HARVESTS
HAVE IMPROVED AND FOOD PRODUCTION
HAS RISEN; THE RELIEF CAMPS HAVE
EMPTIED. MANY AFRICAN NATIONS HAVE
AT THE SAME TIME UNDERTAKEN
ESSENTIAL, AND OFTEN PAINFUL,
POLICY REFORMS IN ORDER TO
ENCOURAGE INCREASED FOOD PRODUCTION
OVER THE LONG-TERM AND TO MINIMIZE
ECONOMIC INEFFICIENCY.

THE UNITED STATES MUST TAKE
ADVANTAGE OF THIS UNIQUE
OPPORTUNITY IF WE ARE TO ASSIST
AFRICA IN MAKING MEANINGFUL STRIDES
TOWARDS LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT.
AFRICA, EVEN A RECOVERING AFRICA,

FACES DECLINING PER CAPITA FOOD PRODUCTION, SOARING POPULATION GROWTH RATES, SEVERE ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND ECONOMIC STAGNATION. OUR AID PROGRAMS IN AFRICA MUST ADDRESS THE CRITICAL NEEDS OF THE POOR MAJORITY, THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT, THE CRUCIAL NECESSITY OF PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT. WE MUST ALSO MAINTAIN OUR ECONOMIC COMMITMENT TO THE CONTINENT, NOT ONLY THROUGH CONTINUED AID BUT ALSO BY FINDING WAYS TO RELIEVE THE DEBT BURDEN THAT MANY OF THESE NATIONS CARRY.

AS WE WORK TO IMPROVE OUR

ASSISTANCE TO SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA,
WE MUST PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO
THE **GROWING** CRISIS IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA.. THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH
AFRICA IS ENGAGED IN A CAMPAIGN OF
POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND MILITARY
DESTABILIZATION AGAINST MANY OF THE
STATES OF THE REGION. THE CITIZENS
OF THE SURROUNDING NATIONS ARE
BEING MADE TO PAY A HIGH PRICE AS
THE ILLEGITIMATE REGIME IN PRETORIA
GOES THROUGH ITS LAST DESPERATE
CONTORTIONS TO PRESERVE APARTHEID.
THIS, IN COMBINATION WITH
DEVELOPMENTAL PROBLEMS, CONTINUED
DROUGHT AND NATURAL DISASTERS, HAS
RESULTED IN DECLINING HEALTH
CONDITIONS, GROWING NUMBERS OF

REFUGEES, AND CHRONIC FOOD
SHORTAGES. MEETING THE
HUMANITARIAN NEEDS OF SOUTHERN
AFRICA IS AS ESSENTIAL NOW AS
MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE OF
THE ENTIRE SUB-SAHARA WAS TWO AND
THREE YEARS AGO. I HAVE JUST
RETURNED FROM MY SECOND TRIP TO
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN 1987. I CAN
SAY THAT THERE IS MUCH ROOM FOR
HOPE IN AFRICA, BUT ALSO MUCH TO BE
DONE. THERE CAN BE FEW PRIORITIES
MORE URGENT THAN FINDING WAYS TO
HELP THESE PEOPLE HELP THEMSELVES.

ARE THERE OPENING STATEMENTS FROM
OUR COLLEAGUES?